

About Our Global Grant Scholar, Christian Cepeda



Hello from the University of Cambridge! My name is Christian Cepeda, and I am deeply honored to be a Global Grant Scholar studying Clinical Neurosciences here, thanks to the generous sponsorship of the Palo Alto University Rotary Club in District 5170 and the warm hospitality of the Cambridge Sawston Rotary Club.

Since arriving in the UK, my academic and research journey has been rich and fulfilling. Under the guidance of eminent mentors at Cambridge, I have honed vital skills crucial for my future career as a physician-scientist. I've mastered techniques such as culturing human brain cells, preparing rat brain sections, and conducting detailed immunohistochemical staining and confocal microscopy imaging.

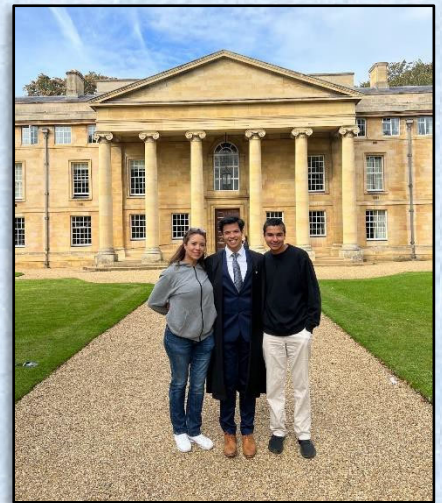
These skills are indispensable as I delve into research focused on Multiple Sclerosis (MS), a debilitating neurological condition affecting millions worldwide.

I am particularly excited about my current project, which investigates the roles of the protein LIGHT and its receptor, HVEM, in modulating microglial activity during MS recovery phases. Our preliminary data suggests a seven-fold increase in HVEM expression in microglia, indicating a potential shift toward an anti-inflammatory state that could significantly aid remyelination and recovery. This research has the potential to pave the way for novel therapeutic strategies that could improve patient outcomes by targeting microglial activation.

The Rotary community here has been incredibly supportive.

At the start of the academic year, I attended a Rotary formal dinner at Queen College's Old Hall, where I had the honor of meeting the mayor of Cambridge and many dedicated Rotarians. Regular invitations to local Rotary club meetings have allowed me to share my research progress and foster valuable connections. These interactions have not only enriched my stay but also deepened my appreciation for the global Rotary family.

My sponsor club back home has been equally supportive, providing networking opportunities that led to a summer internship at a major health network. This experience allowed me to present my findings and receive valuable feedback, enhancing both my personal and professional growth.



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I have recently been accepted into the University of California, Irvine, for their MSTP (dual MD and PhD degree program) and their PRIME-LC (program for helping the underserved Latino community). As I prepare for this next phase, I reflect on how Rotary's support has opened countless doors for me and equipped me with the tools to make a meaningful impact in the medical field.

I am deeply grateful to all the Rotarians and clubs involved for their unwavering support and encouragement. The connections, knowledge, and sense of community I have gained through Rotary are treasures that I will carry with me as I continue my path as a scholar and future physician. Thank you for this life-changing opportunity.